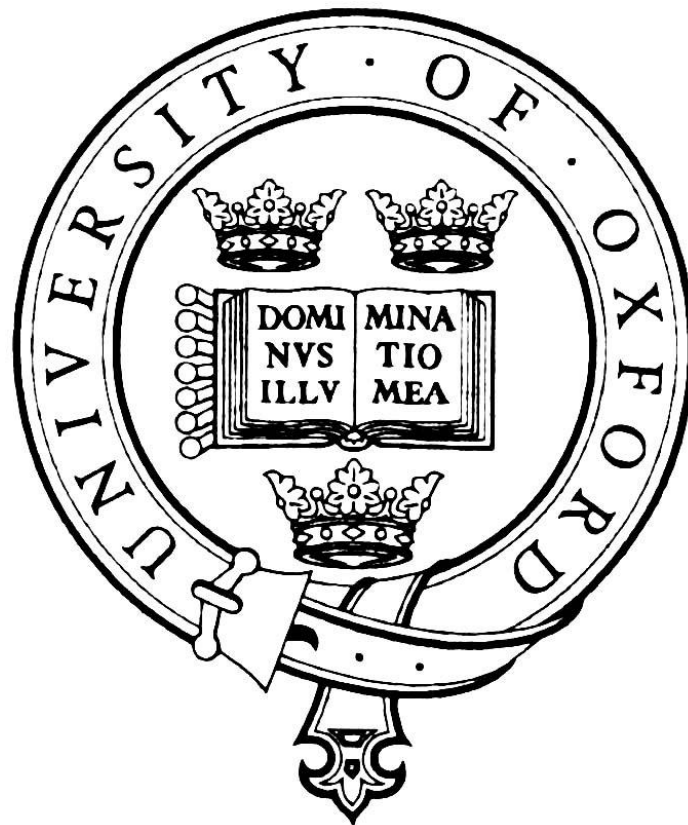


University of Oxford
BOARD OF THE FACULTY OF HISTORY

Conventions for the presentation
of essays, dissertations, and theses



The regulations concerning the degrees of M.Litt. and D.Phil. are set out in the *Examination Regulations*. The purpose of this document is to give some general guidance to candidates about the writing of a thesis for either of these degrees. Candidates who are writing a dissertation as part of an M.Phil., M.Sc. or M.St. degree should also refer to these notes for guidance in their written work.

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

CONTENTS

1. <i>General</i>	4
2. <i>Pagination</i>	4
3. <i>Order of contents</i>	4
4. <i>Italics/underlining</i>	5
5. <i>Inverted commas/quotation marks</i>	5
6. <i>Abbreviations</i>	5
7. <i>Capitals</i>	5
8. <i>Quotations</i>	6
9. <i>Quotations from foreign languages</i>	6
10. <i>Dates</i>	7
11. <i>References/footnotes</i>	7
12. <i>Bibliography</i>	10
13. <i>Format and binding</i>	12

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

Style is a personal matter, while the precise structure of the thesis will depend on your subject and the kinds of material you use. So any rules given here can only be of the most general kind. You should of course work closely with your supervisor when writing up your thesis, and take his or her advice to arrive at a satisfactory structure for your thesis and to improve style and clarity of expression. These matters are important. Just because you are writing in the first instance only for two examiners, who will have to read through your work at any cost, does not mean that their needs as readers can be ignored. On the contrary, examiners will not be able to evaluate your ideas properly unless they are clearly and logically expressed. Style is as important to a good thesis as it is to a well written book.

In general you should aim for a plain and succinct style that expresses your ideas clearly and economically. Develop your ideas in a logical sequence – in the thesis as a whole, in individual chapters, and within the sections and paragraphs of each chapter. The introduction is very important, as the starting point from which your argument develops. The precise form of the introduction will vary from thesis to thesis, but almost certainly it and/or the immediately succeeding chapter will discuss problems and sources and relate your work to the existing literature in the field. Thereafter you should make sure you signpost the various parts of your argument clearly, when necessary referring forward and back to later and earlier parts of the thesis. Avoid laboured and pedantic expression, and do not overload your text with redundant detail or excessive qualification. Use your judgement in developing arguments and deploying evidence. A novel assertion or new line of argument will need to be well supported; a truism or accepted conclusion will not. Do not be too defensive. Candidates should assume that examiners will be critical, but they will not be hypercritical or purely destructive.

Format is obviously a less central problem but is nonetheless important in presenting your work ‘in a lucid and scholarly manner’. Tidy and rational presentation make for easy reading, while references that are incorrectly or unsystematically cited can be very irritating if not actually misleading. Even if your thesis is excellent in every other respect, the examiners may require you to correct imperfections in the presentation before they recommend that you be awarded your degree. You should therefore take great care over format and presentation, and allow yourself sufficient time to proof-read your work carefully before submission. The following suggestions, in so far as they go beyond the printed regulations, are not strictly obligatory, but they are what the Faculty Board recommends as clear and acceptable.

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

1. General

Candidates should consult the current *Examination Regulations* for the regulations on presentation and submission of theses. The relevant extract from the *Regulations* is available from the Graduate Studies Office, Wellington Square, or the office of the Director of Graduate Studies, History Faculty.

Two books are invaluable for the authors of scholarly works, including theses. They are *Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers at the University Press, Oxford*, 39th edn (Oxford, 1983), and *The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (Oxford, 1981). Together they form a mine of information on such matters as format for references, expressing dates and numbers, abbreviations, foreign words and phrases, transliterations, abbreviations, common spelling difficulties, and rules of capitalization and punctuation.

2. Pagination

Pagination should run consecutively from beginning to end, excluding the abstracts but including the bibliography and any appendices, etc. Cross-references should include page-numbers.

3. Order of contents

After the title-page should normally follow in sequence:

(a) **Preface**, if any. This should be kept as short as possible and should be used to call the reader's attention to any new discoveries and important points about sources, treatment, and obligations to other works. Acknowledgements may also be included.

(b) **Acknowledgements** (if not included in a preface).

(c) **Table of Contents**. This should show in sequence, with page-numbers, all the subdivisions of the thesis, including the titles of chapters, appendices, etc.

(d) **List of abbreviations**, cue-titles, symbols, etc. (see below, para. 11).

(e) The thesis divided into numbered **chapters**. Each chapter should have a clear descriptive title. The introduction may form the first chapter, or may stand separate.

(f) **Conclusion**. The exact form of the conclusion will vary, but it need not be very elaborate. A few hundred words to summarise your conclusions and their implications will often suffice.

(g) **Appendices**, if any, also with descriptive titles.

(h) **Bibliography** (see below, para. 12).

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

4. *Italics/underlining*

Italics (or underlining if your printer does not have an italic font) should be used:

(a) For the titles of books, plays and periodicals (see also para. 11).

(b) For technical terms or phrases in languages other than English (but not for quotations or complete sentences).

(c) For certain abbreviations and expressions, notably *a.* (*anno*), *c.* (*circa*), *et al.*, *passim*, *sic*. Technically the abbreviations *ante*, *et seq.*, *infra*, *post*, *supra*, *v.* (*vide*) should be italicized, but they are better not used. Avoid also *loc. cit.* and *op. cit.*, which can be in either italic or roman type but are confusing for the reader in either case. — Use ordinary roman type rather than italics for the following abbreviations: *c.* (chapter of statute, as in 1 Edw. VI, c. 14), *ch.* (chapter of book), *e.g.*, *ibid.* (*ibidem* = in the same place), *idem* (the same [author]), *i.e.*, *q.v.* (*quod vide* = which see), *r.* (*recto*), *s.v.* (*sub verbo* = under a word or heading, as in a dictionary), *v.* (*versus*), *v.* (*verso*), *viz.* (*videlicet* = namely).

(d) Occasionally for emphasis: frequent use of italics for this purpose is out of place in academic writing.

5. *Inverted commas/quotation marks*

These are used to denote the titles of articles and named manuscripts (see also para. 11) and for quotations. It is normal to use single inverted commas, except for quotations within quotations, which are distinguished by double inverted commas. Remember always to check that inverted commas are closed as well as opened.

6. *Abbreviations*

Though admissible in footnotes, abbreviations should be used as little as possible in the body of the text. When used, they should follow some simple standard system and be consistent in form. It is wise to keep a list of your abbreviated forms. In particular, you should make a card, slip or computer entry for each book, article, or volume of documents the first time it is consulted, and include the abbreviated form of reference that is to be used. These entries will also serve as the raw material for the bibliography (see para. 11).

For the common abbreviations used in footnotes, etc., see para. 4(c) above.

7. *Capitals*

Capitals should be used sparingly in the text of your thesis. They should be used for (a) proper names; (b) institutions and corporate bodies when the term used is the official title

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

or part of the official title: e.g. ‘King’s Bench’, ‘House of Commons’; and (c) ‘the Crown’, ‘the Church’, ‘the House’ (referring to the House of Commons), and similar usages. Use them for titles and dignities of individuals only when these are followed by the person’s name: thus ‘Duke William of Normandy’, but ‘William, duke of Normandy’ or ‘the duke’.

Capitals should also be used for the principal words in the titles of books and articles (see para. 11).

Note Different rules may apply in foreign languages. As a general rule, only the first word is capitalized in titles in European languages other than English, German (which of course capitalizes all nouns), and Welsh (which follows English usage). However, there are various complications. Some of these are detailed in *Hart’s Rules*, but if after consulting this work you still find yourself in doubt you should take advice from your supervisor.

8. Quotations

Quotations in verse, if of more than one line, should be indented and in single spacing. Quotations from prose should run on in the text if they do not exceed two or three lines, otherwise they too should be indented and in single spacing.

You should retain the spelling used in the original documents. Punctuation and capitalization may need to be modernized, but in some contexts this may be a sensitive issue. You should therefore consult your supervisor on this matter, and your policy should be set out in your list of conventions and abbreviations. When quotations include contracted forms, the contractions should normally be extended and the extension indicated by italics or by square brackets.

9. Quotations from foreign languages

Quotations from foreign languages present special difficulties. These vary from case to case, so it is impossible to give absolutely clear-cut advice. You should discuss the issues with your supervisor and take his or her advice. If doubts remain, consult the Director of Graduate Studies. Do this well before you plan to submit your thesis, because it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Graduate Studies Committee. However, the following offers some general points of guidance.

Remember first of all that direct quotation should be used *sparingly*. Often an English paraphrase or even a brief summary will suffice, thus eliminating the problem of presenting foreign language material. Of course you must make sure that your summaries or paraphrases are accurate and you must, as always, give precise references to the original material.

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

That said, there will undoubtedly be many occasions when direct quotations of reasonable length are either desirable or essential. Sometimes it is appropriate to present foreign language sources in the original, particularly when people to whom the thesis will be of interest (including the examiners) may be reasonably expected to be familiar with the language in question, and/or the quotations are very brief. When quotations are extensive or in a variety of different languages it is often better to present them in English translation. It will not normally be necessary to include the original version in the footnotes or appendices, except if you are laying special emphasis on particular phrases or passages (so that the exact form of the original is important), or the original text is in some other way integral to your argument. The argument for full reproduction is obviously stronger in the case of quotations from manuscript sources. If you do include translations, you will need to make allowance for them in your word limit, or in appropriate cases make a special application to the Graduate Studies Committee for an extension of the word limit (if you are working towards an M.St., M.Sc., or M.Phil. such an application is made to the Chairman of Examiners for the degree in the first instance).

Languages which do not use the Roman alphabet present another range of difficulties. Some basic information, including the British Standard system for the transliteration of Russian, is given in *Hart's Rules*. However, you should also seek the advice of your supervisor.

10. *Dates*

Dates should be given in the form: 12 October 1925. Unless the contrary is indicated it is to be assumed that the date refers to the year beginning on 1 January. Double dates in Old and New Style should be given in the form: 11/22 July 1705. Periods of years should be given thus: 1732–54, 1743–9, and 1760–1820. In footnotes or similar matter, names of the first four and the last five months of the year may be abbreviated thus: Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug. Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.

Other complications of dating and chronology may require special conventions: these should be clearly stated in the list of abbreviations, etc., at the beginning of the thesis.

11. *References/footnotes*

References should be in single spacing and should normally be placed at the foot of the page. When a reference is given for a statement or quotation, it must be precise. But judgement is required to decide whether a reference need be given or not. A reference is not required for a familiar quotation used for purely literary purposes, nor for a statement of fact that no-one would question. The purpose of a reference is to enable readers to turn up the evidence for any quotation or statement that they may wish to question or pursue. For this reason it should be absolutely clear, but it need not be long. Lengthy titles of

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

books or manuscripts can be abbreviated, provided that no confusion is thereby caused. The titles of standard works may also be shortened, but not unduly; the abbreviations must be used with consistency, and should be included in the list at the beginning of the thesis. You may omit 'London' as a place of publication if you indicate your intention to do so in your preliminary list of abbreviations and conventions. It is more economical and hence preferable to use initials – generally the full set, not just the first initial – rather than to spell out the forenames of authors, but some latitude is possible here, depending on individual taste. Whatever system you adopt, however, you should use it *consistently* throughout the thesis. Your supervisor will give you further advice if necessary.

There may be occasions when it is appropriate to quote a manuscript or archival source from a citation in a printed book or article. In such a case it is your duty to make quite clear that you have not yourself consulted and transcribed the original, and to give as your reference the relevant printed text and not the call mark of the document.

Citations from works published after 1800 should be made according to the following examples. (The ones given are English, but remember that books in foreign languages may require different rules for capitalization.) You need to examine these examples carefully. Among other features, note in particular the use of italics for the titles of books and journals (whereas the titles of articles are given in inverted commas, as also are the titles of unpublished theses); the location of the names of editors as opposed to authors; the provision and placing of information about the edition and the total number of volumes in the works cited; and the omission of p. or pp. (page or pages) after volume numbers given in Roman numerals. Runs of pages should be expressed as economically as possible: e.g. 16–19, 20–21, 42–6, 100–104, 210–15, 327–9. Runs of dates follow the same rule, save that dates involving different centuries are not contracted: e.g. 1610–15, 1748–9, 1798–1810.

Secondary works:

Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 164.

W. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, 4th edn (2 vols., Oxford, 1906), ii, 15–18.

G. Lapsley, 'Buzones', *English Historical Review*, 47 (1932), 177–9.

E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, no. 38 (Dec. 1967), pp. 56–7.

Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London and Basingstoke, 1973), p. 136.

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

J.A. Bossy, 'Elizabethan Catholicism: the Link with France' (Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1961), p. 80. [Place of deposit of theses should be stated if there is any possibility of doubt or confusion.]

Editions of texts or sources:

Chronicles of London, ed. C.L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1925), pp. 156–7.

Tudor Economic Documents, ed. R.H. Tawney and E. Power (3 vols., London, 1924), ii, 11–12.

Editions of texts and sources that are part of a series:

The Estate Book of Henry de Bray, ed. D. Willis (Camden Soc., 3rd ser., xxvii, 1916), p. 3.

Citations from parliamentary papers and debates should be made thus:

Parliamentary Papers 1810, xlvi (125), p. 6: Smith to Brown, 1 Jan. 1809.

Hansard, 3rd series, 1832, xi, 602.

Citations from well-known works of ancient and medieval authors, of which various editions exist, should give both the book/chapter number, etc. of the text and the page reference to the specific edition you are using, thus:

Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iii. 25 (ed. Plummer, p. 181) [In a case like this you would give the full bibliographical details of Plummer's edition either in your list of abbreviations at the beginning of the thesis or in your first reference to Bede's history.]

Citations from the Bible – unless for the purposes of your argument you need to refer to a specific edition, or translation – should be made thus:

Gen. xv. 24

Citations from early printed books (say before 1800) present some special difficulties. The full titles are often very long, and may need to be silently abbreviated without truncating them unduly. You should follow the contemporary spelling, except that the usage of 'u', 'v', 'i' and 'j' may be standardized according to modern conventions. The contemporary punctuation should also be followed as far as possible. It is better not to use capitals for the initial letters of words within titles (unless they are proper nouns, etc).

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

For guidance refer to the standard bibliographical works, notably A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, 2nd edn revised and enlarged by W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer (2 vols., London, 1976–86) and D. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British North America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641–1700*, 2nd edn (3 vols., New York, 1972–94). Your supervisor will give you additional advice.

Citations from manuscript versions of works should be made thus:

‘*Speculum virginum*’, British Library, MS Arundel 44, fo. 3v.

Citations of manuscript or typescript sources, including records, diaries, personal papers, etc., should be made by means of the call numbers of the appropriate library or repository. If the nature of the materials is obvious from the text, this is all that is necessary. However, it is often helpful, and sometimes necessary to avoid confusion, to add brief descriptions to give the reader some indication of the nature of the sources referred to, as in the following examples:

British Library, Add. MS 29132 (Hastings Papers), fo. 434: Clive to Hastings, 1 Aug, 1771.

PRO, STAC 8/104/20 (Star Chamber Proceedings, James I, Cripple and wife v. Lambe *et al.*, 1619).

Wiltshire Record Office, D1/39/1/26 (Bishop of Salisbury, Instance Act Book, 1596–8), fo. 227.

The abbreviation ‘*ibid.*’ (*ibidem* = in the same place), as a device to avoid repetition of title, may only be used to refer to the source last mentioned; similarly ‘*idem*’ (the same) refers to the last mentioned author. You will sometimes see the abbreviations *loc. cit.* or *op. cit.* following the name of an author, referring back to places or titles already mentioned. But these abbreviations are best not used. They can easily cause confusion if more than one work by the same author has been cited, and it can waste the time and fray the temper of a reader who has to hunt through previous pages to discover the title of a work. It is better simply to repeat the title in an abbreviated form.

For other abbreviations used in references, see para. 4(c) above.

12. Bibliography

The bibliography should include all the sources and secondary works cited in the thesis. It should normally consist of plain lists of items, without comment, and it is on this basis

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

that the bibliography is excluded from the word limit. If you need to include substantial annotations, they will be counted as part of your thesis proper.

The bibliography should be divided into (1) Manuscript and archival sources, (2) Printed primary sources, (3) Printed secondary works [i.e., modern or relatively modern materials in the form of books, articles, etc.], and (4) Unpublished theses. In practice, it is not always easy to draw the line between printed primary sources and secondary works: doubtful cases should be discussed, if necessary, with your supervisor.

Manuscript and archival sources should be listed under each library or other repository, arranged alphabetically and with the location clearly given in each case. The manuscripts themselves should be briefly listed by class, with call numbers. It is not usually necessary to list individual items within each class, especially if those items are numerous and/or you have used a long series of consecutive records. However, in certain circumstances it may be desirable or necessary to list the individual items: you would do so, for example, if you had merely sampled a long series, or to draw attention to serious gaps in a chronological sequence.

Printed materials, whether contemporary or modern, are as far as possible listed alphabetically by surname of author. Anonymous works should be listed alphabetically by the first word of the title (excluding the articles 'The', 'A', 'An' or their foreign equivalents). Modern or relatively modern editions of contemporary manuscript materials may be listed alphabetically *either* by surname of the editor *or* by the first word of the title (again excluding 'The', 'A', etc.). Entries by name should give the surname first, followed by initials or forename, and should be punctuated thus (notice the indent on a second or subsequent line):

Elton, G.R., *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge, 1973).

An extended dash or similar typographical device may be used instead of repeating an author's name for subsequent works by the same author. In such cases the works should be arranged chronologically by date of publication; works by an author alone precede those written jointly with others.

In the bibliography it is usual to give full page references for articles in journals or collections of essays, thus:

Donahue, Charles, Jr, 'The Canon Law on the Formation of Marriage and Social Practice in the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of Family History*, viii (1983), 144–58.

Tyacke, Nicholas, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London and Basingstoke, 1973), pp. 119–43.

Conventions for the presentation of written work in History

13. *Format and binding*

Detailed prescriptions may be found in the *Examination Decrees and Regulations*. Essentially, the thesis must be printed or typed with a margin of 3 to 3.5 cm on the left-hand edge of each page (or on the inner edge, whether left-hand or right-hand, in the case of a thesis which is printed on both sides of the paper). Theses in typescript should present the main text in double spacing with quotations and footnotes in single spacing. In the case of word-processed or printed theses, where the output resembles that of a typewriter, double spacing should be taken to mean a distance of about 0.33 inch or 8 mm between successive lines of text. Candidates are advised that it is their responsibility to ensure that the print of their thesis is of an adequate definition and standard of legibility.

Footnotes should normally be placed at the bottom of each page. Where they are given at the end of each chapter or at the end of the thesis, two separate unbound copies of footnotes should also be presented, for the convenience of the examiners. The pages of the thesis must be numbered. Each copy should have an abstract included.

One abstract of the thesis should concisely summarize its scope and principal arguments, in about 300 words. It should be printed or typewritten, on one side only, of A4-sized paper. Each copy of the abstract should be headed with the title of the thesis, the name and college of the candidate, the degree for which it is submitted, and the term and year of submission. One copy of the abstract prepared at the time of the examination should be bound into each of the examiners' copies of the thesis. – History theses must include a second abstract of the thesis, which shall not normally exceed 1,500 words for the M.Litt. or 2,500 words for the D. Phil., prepared by the student. – Copies of both abstracts shall be bound into the copy of the thesis which shall be deposited in the Bodleian Library. One loose copy of the 300 words abstract, printed on a single page, must be submitted together with the Library copy to the Examination Schools.

At the time of the examination, candidates are required to submit two copies of their thesis, each of which must be securely bound in hard or soft covers. Loose-leaf binding is not acceptable.

Once a candidate for the M.Phil., M.Litt., or D.Phil. has been given leave to supplicate, a finalized copy of the thesis, including all necessary corrections and amendments approved by the examiners, is deposited in the Bodleian Library. This copy must be in a permanently fixed binding, drilled and sewn, in a stiff board case in library buckram, in a dark colour, and lettered on the spine with the candidate's name and initials, the degree, and the year of submission. Candidates are warned that they may not proceed to take their degree until this requirement has been fulfilled.